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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-sixth year

Identical letters dated 19 August 2011 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

This letter constitutes the 401st letter we have written to you since 28 September 2000. These letters have documented many, but not all, of Israel, the occupying Power's, ongoing violations of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law, including war crimes, against the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. These crimes by the occupying Power have not only continued to inflict harm and suffering on the Palestinian civilian population living under its 44-year-old occupation, but to fuel tensions and instability in the region and to cause the continued steep deterioration of the situation on the ground, including by stoking another cycle of lethal violence.

To add to the long list of criminal acts by Israel, the occupying Power, I must draw your attention to the intensification of military aggression by the occupying Power against the Palestinian people in the besieged Gaza Strip. Ten Palestinians have been killed and dozens more injured by a series of Israeli military air strikes against the Gaza Strip launched late on Thursday, 18 August 2011, and today. Among the innocent civilians brutally murdered by the occupying Power were two children, including 2-year-old Malek Khaled Shaath and 13-year-old Mahmoud Atef Abu Samra.

The attacks throughout the Gaza Strip also killed eight other Palestinians, including Abu Awad Al-Nairab, Emad Hammad, Emad Nasr, Khaled Al-Masri, Mohammed Innayeh and Samed Abed. Khaled Hamad Shaath, who was the father of the 2-year-old boy mentioned above, was also killed. In addition, more than 20 Palestinian civilians, mainly children and women, including a pregnant woman, were injured, in the aerial bombardments against various neighbourhoods and areas of the besieged Gaza Strip. Moreover, Ashraf Azzam died of injuries inflicted by Israeli air strikes that were carried out in the Gaza Strip a few days ago, as documented in our letter to you dated 17 August 2011 (A/ES-10/528-S/2011-521).

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In an act of collective punishment, Israeli war planes also bombed an electric generator in the Al-Nuseirat refugee camp, causing a power outage that has plunged Gaza into darkness during the holy month of Ramadan. The threat of even more killings and destruction by the occupying Power looms very darkly over Gaza as Israeli officials, particularly the Prime Minister, are declaring that this onslaught is "only the beginning".

In light of the dangerous deterioration of the situation and escalation of tensions, the Palestinian leadership calls upon the international community, including the Security Council, to compel Israel to cease its military attacks against the Gaza Strip and to abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law and to cease forthwith all attacks against the Palestinian civilian population and all forms of military reprisals and collective punishment against them, including its dehumanizing and unlawful blockade. As the Palestinian leadership has done time and time again in the past, it continues to condemn the killing of all innocent civilians, whoever they maybe. Having said that, it must be recalled, however, that Israel, as an occupying Power, has responsibilities under international humanitarian law towards the civilian population it occupies and must also respect all human rights conventions, which are applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. We further stress the imperative of the protection of civilians living under foreign occupation in all circumstances.

The international community must not allow Israel, the occupying Power, to refuel the vicious cycle of violence that has claimed so many innocent lives and wrought vast destruction and devastation on the Palestinian people under its occupation. Nor can it allow Israel to act with impunity without repercussions as this can only, and will continue to, embolden the occupying Power to commit crimes without fear of punishment. Clearly, the situation demands immediate redress, which also includes real and genuine efforts towards ensuring accountability for all of the war crimes committed over the years by the occupying Power against the Palestinian people.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 400 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 17 August 2011 (A/ES-10/528-S/2011/521), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations